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(Updated)

Follow-up to an Unsatisfactory Coliform Sample

A drinking water sample is unsatisfactory whenever coliform bacteria are present. If your water system receives unsatisfactory sample results, you must collect a set of repeat samples within 24 hours.

The purpose of repeat samples is to confirm the presence of coliform bacteria in the system and determine possible causes of contamination. **Do not** shock-chlorinate the system before collecting repeat samples without prior approval from the Department of Health Office of Drinking Water (ODW).

Review your sampling procedure

Review your sampling procedure to make sure samples are taken correctly. For help see *Coliform Sampling Procedure* (331-225).*

Collect repeat samples

The number of required repeat samples is based on the number of routine samples your system collects monthly.

If your system collects ONE routine sample per month, a total of **FOUR REPEAT** samples are required from the following locations:

1. The same tap as the original unsatisfactory routine sample.
2. An active service within five active connections upstream from where the original unsatisfactory sample was taken.
3. An active service within five active connections downstream from where the original unsatisfactory sample was taken.
4. Another location – such as the source or right after the storage tank – that will provide useful information for determining a source of contamination. If you do not have a tap at the source or storage tank, choose another active service.

If a system collects TWO OR MORE routine samples per month, a total of **THREE REPEAT** samples are required from the following locations:

1. The same tap as the original unsatisfactory routine sample.
2. An active service within five active connections upstream from where the original unsatisfactory sample was taken.
3. An active service within five active connections downstream from where the original unsatisfactory sample was taken.

If you cannot sample as outlined above, or **if any repeat samples are unsatisfactory**, call your ODW regional office at the number listed on Page 2.

Thoroughly inspect the water system

Try to identify potential sources of contamination, such as “openings” in the system and/or treatment equipment failure. Make needed repairs to your system. For help see *Troubleshooting Checklist for Coliform Contamination* (331-180).*

The month after an unsatisfactory sample

In the month following an unsatisfactory sample, a minimum of FIVE ROUTINE samples is required. If you routinely take five or more samples each month, follow your regular schedule. If any of these samples are unsatisfactory, further investigation and more repeat samples are required.

For more information

Northwest Region – Kent

Coliform Program: 253-395-6775

Main Office: 253-395-6750

Southwest Region – Olympia

Coliform Program: 360-753-5090

Main Office: 360-664-0768

360-236-3030 (After June 26, 2006)

Eastern Region – Spokane

Coliform Program: 509-456-2788

Main Office: 509-456-3115

* ODW publications are online at <http://www4.doh.wa.gov/dw/publications/publications.cfm>

